AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-8 (cancelled)

Claim 9 (currently amended): A computer-implemented process for use in [[In]] a computer network that includes at least two computers communicatively coupled to each other, a process performed by the computers the process comprising the steps of:

(a) accepting a first user's request;

(b) searching a local or private knowledge object repository comprising local knowledge objects, each of the local private knowledge objects being associated with a specific the first user;

(c) searching a central knowledge object repository comprising and all contributed knowledge objects, each of the contributed knowledge objects being associated with a specific user;

(d) returning to the first user a list of links for all matching local and contributed knowledge objects, said matching local and contributed knowledge objects being marked either local or published or listed;

(e) allowing access to said matching local and contributed knowledge objects if the first user chooses a knowledge object marked local or published knowledge object from the list; [[and]]

(f) forwarding the first user's request to a second user and prompting the second user for authorization of access if the first user chooses a knowledge object marked listed knowledge object from the list, the second user having control of access to the knowledge object marked listed knowledge object; and

(g) returning to the first user the chosen knowledge object marked listed if the second user allows access.

Claim 10 (original): The process of claim 9, wherein the first user initiates a request by any of:

entering a query; and

clicking a link in a directory.

Claim 11 (original): The process of claim 9, wherein the second user has the option to be either anonymous or identifiable.

Claim 12 (original): The process of claim 9, wherein the step (e) further comprises the step of: prompting the first user to enter a correct user identification.

Claim 13 (original): The process of claim 9, wherein the step (f) further comprises the step of:

requiring a sufficiently specific query so that a request cannot be forwarded to the second user until the search request is sufficiently specific so that it yields a finite, manageable set of results.

Claim 14 (currently amended): The process of claim 9, after the step (f), further comprising the step of:

~~(g) returning to the first user the chosen listed knowledge object if the second user allows access;~~

(h) notifying the first user that the request is not completed if the second user declines access to the listed knowledge object.

Claim 15 (original): The process of claim 14, wherein the step (g) further comprises the step of:

prompting the second user to add a message for the first user.

Claim 16 (original): The process of claim 14, wherein the step (g) further comprises the step of:

prompting the second user to publish the chosen listed knowledge object.

Claim 17 (original): The process of claim 9, wherein the step (f) further comprises the step of:

prompting the second user to provide a substitution if the second user determines that the chosen listed knowledge object is irrelevant or sub optimal for the task indicated in the first user's request.

Claim 18 (currently amended): The process of claim 17, further comprising any step of:

returning to the first user a local ~~private~~ knowledge object from the second user's local ~~private~~ domain if the second user so decides; and

prompting the second user to mark the local ~~private~~ knowledge object as published.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The process of claim 18, further comprising any step of:

tracking the number of times a user discloses a local ~~private~~ knowledge object as a listed knowledge object;

tracking the number of times a user authorizes other users' access to a listed knowledge object;

tracking the number of times a user publishes knowledge objects;

tracking the number of times a published knowledge object is utilized by the users other than the user who contributed the published knowledge object; and

tracking the number of times a user utilizes knowledge objects originating from other users;

wherein said numbers are used in determining a reward to the user for the user's involvement in knowledge sharing.

Claim 20 (currently amended): A computer readable storage ~~usable~~ medium containing instructions in computer readable form for carrying out a process for promoting information and knowledge sharing among the users registered to a computer network, the process comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(a) ~~accepting~~ receiving a first user's request;

(b) <u>causing a search of</u> ~~searching~~ a local ~~or private~~ knowledge object repository ~~and all~~ <u>comprising</u> local, ~~directly accessible~~ knowledge objects associated with <u>the first</u> ~~a specific~~ user;

(c) <u>causing a search of</u> ~~searching~~ a central knowledge object repository <u>comprising</u> ~~and all~~ contributed knowledge objects associated with [[the]] <u>other</u> users;

(d) returning to the first user a list of links for all matching <u>local and contributed</u> knowledge objects, said matching <u>local and contributed</u> knowledge objects being marked either local or published or listed;

(e) allowing access <u>to said matching local and contributed knowledge objects</u> if the first user chooses a <u>knowledge object marked</u> local or published ~~knowledge object form the list~~; [[and]]

(f) forwarding the first user's request to a second user and prompting the second user for authorization of access if the first user chooses a <u>knowledge object marked</u> listed ~~knowledge object~~ from the list, the second user having control of access to the <u>knowledge object marked</u> listed ~~knowledge object; and~~

(g) allowing access by the first user to the chosen listed knowledge object if the second user allows access.

Claim 21 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> ~~usable~~ medium of claim 20, wherein the first user initiates a request by any of:

entering a query; and

clicking a link in a directory.

Claim 22 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> ~~usable~~ medium of claim 21, wherein the first user initiates the request either anonymously or identifiably.

Claim 23 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> ~~usable~~ medium of claim 20, wherein the second user elects to be identified in the system either anonymously or identifiably.

Claim 24 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> ~~usable~~ medium of claim 20, wherein the step (e) further comprises the step of:

prompting the first user to enter a correct user identification.

Claim 25 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> <s>usable</s> medium of claim 20, after the step (f), further comprising the step of:

<s>(g) returning to the first user the chosen listed knowledge object if the second user allows access;</s>

(h) notifying the first user if the second user declines access to the listed knowledge object.

Claim 26 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> <s>usable</s> medium of claim 25, wherein the step (g) further comprises the step of:

prompting the second user to add a message for the first user.

Claim 27 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> <s>usable</s> medium of claim 15, wherein the step (g) further comprises the step of:

prompting the second user to publish the chosen listed knowledge object.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> <s>usable</s> medium of claim 20, wherein the step (f) further comprises the step of:

prompting the second user to make a suggestion if the second user thinks that the chosen listed knowledge object is irrelevant to the first user's request.

Claim 29 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> <s>usable</s> medium of claim 28, further comprising any step of:

returning to the first user an unlisted knowledge object from the second user's private domain if the second user so decides; and

prompting the second user to make the unlisted knowledge object as listed or published.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The computer <u>readable storage</u> <s>usable</s> medium of claim 29, further comprising any step of:

tracking the number of times a user discloses a <u>local</u> <s>private</s> knowledge object as a listed knowledge object;

tracking the number of times a user authorizes other users' access to a listed knowledge object;

tracking the number of times a user publishes knowledge objects;

tracking the number of times a published knowledge object is utilized by the users other than the user who contributed the published knowledge object; and

tracking the number of times a user utilizes knowledge objects originating from other users;

wherein said numbers are used in determining a reward to the user for the user's involvement in knowledge sharing.